1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

plateau from Antagarh tahsil. The northern half of this north-eastern plateau is Kondagaon tahsil, and the southern Jagdalpur. The height of the plateau varies from 2,500 or 2,400 feet at its northern and southern edges to about 1,800 feet near Jagdalpur. It is a region of evergreen forests, with the beautiful sal (*Shorea robusta*) as its characteristic tree. The temperature seldom exceeds 104° in the summer, and at Jagdalpur descends to 40° in the winter, while hoar frosts are not uncommon in the forests. Kondagaon tahsil is under-developed and jungly, much of it and Antagarh having been comparatively recently settled by Gond immigrants from Chhattisgarh. Jagdalpur, on the other hand, has miles of excellent rice cultivation in its extensive open plains, and is the only heavily populated part of the State, except adjacent parts of Dantewara. On its south-eastern and southern edges, however, it has hilly country heavily forested or inhabited by primitive Parjas and Bison-horn Marias.

The north-west corner of the State is the Antagarh tahsil. The north of this is a continuation of the Chhattisgarh-Kanker plain 800 or 900 feet above sea-level, bounded on the west and north by the Chanda and Drug districts of the Central Provinces and by Kanker State. This plain, the second main natural division of Bastar, is reached from Keskal and north Kondagaon through the Amabera *pargana*, which, though on the 2,000 feet plateau, is in Antagarh, by a forest road descending the steep Matlaghat by a recently re-aligned and easily-graded descent. The main road from Jagdalpur and Kondagaon through Antagarh to Rajnandgaon rail-head enters the tahsil in the Benur *pargana* on the 2,000 feet plateau and descends 200 or 300 feet to Narainpur which, with the adjacent *parganas* of Kurangal, Dugal, Baragaon, Ghat Jhorian and Bare Jhorian, as well as Benur and the lowland or 'Kalpatti' villages of Chhote Dongar *pargana*, are an intermediate stage between the true 2,000 feet plateau and the plain of north Antagarh. The inhabitants are mostly what were called by Glasfurd and other early writers Jhorias, in appearance scarcely distinguishable from the Marias of the Abujhmar hills, with similar dancing dress, and customs similar, but considerably modified by sojourn in the lowlands and contact with other tribes. From Narainpur a forest road runs westward along the Nei Bherat valley to Sonpur, with an extension thence to Paralkot and Maroda, where it meets another forest road that comes westward from Taroki on the Narainpur-Antagarh road across the north Antagarh plain. The Sonpur, Paralkot and Paralkot-Kalpatti *parganas* are really lowland *parganas* in the middle of highland Maria *parganas*, and the two latter belong properly speaking to the north Antagarh plain. The

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

The Court of Wards finally gave the lease to a Hindu of the Kurmi caste, on a premium of Rs. 211. The present lessee, his son, was made protected in 1923. Though the aboriginals as a whole have not actually lost land since 1902, the lessee had been very oppressive, forcing the aboriginals who borrowed from him to surrender their fields to him and then selling them to new tenants.

In Panabaras the departmental working of the five teak forests, largely built up, as already stated, by the Court of Wards insisting from 1900 onwards on *podu* cultivators sowing teak-seed on their plots in the second year of cultivation, has done something on Allapilli lines to bring economic relief to the local aboriginals. These four estates have been special targets for the agrarian agitation already mentioned, which started from the adjacent non-excluded Dondi-Lohara zamindari and made a special feature of inciting the Gonds and Marias to burn *podu*.

In the Garchiroli zamindaris on the whole the Marias and other aboriginals continue to hold their own and to take gradually to permanent cultivation, though far more slowly than outsiders: in the twenty years after the 1922-3 settlement aboriginal cultivation had increased by only 23 per cent., but non-aboriginal by 50 per cent., there being 6,523 aboriginal tenants of 76,113 acres against 4,012 other tenants of 46,863 acres. The aboriginals still have miles and miles of land available for extending their cultivation, but always hanker after their beloved *podu*.

This *podu* question, as I have already said, was the principal topic at the conference of the Drug and Chanda Partially Excluded Areas zamindars at Murumgaon on New Year's Day, 1940. Other topics were the neglect of the Garchiroli zamindaris by the Chanda District Council, and the future of the zamindars, in view of the political threat to the whole zamindari system. To deal first with the last topic, let me say that while there may be much to be said for 'liquidation' of big landed estates, especially of absentee proprietors, the policy towards aboriginal zamindars should be different. Most of them are descendants of long lines of tribal chieftains holding estates on very ancient tenures dating back to the semi-tribal, semi-feudal systems[1] under which most of middle India was organized centuries ago. Properly speaking these chiefs in relation to their ryots and fellow tribesmen are *primi inter pares*. Some of the wealthier aboriginal proprietors of the huge Chhattisgarh estates may have aped the princeling: but most of the Chanda zamindars are closely akin to their people—the Rangi chief, for example, is frankly a Maria among Marias—and do their utmost to protect their ryots. Legally, so long as the proprietary rights in any

[1] See p. 4.